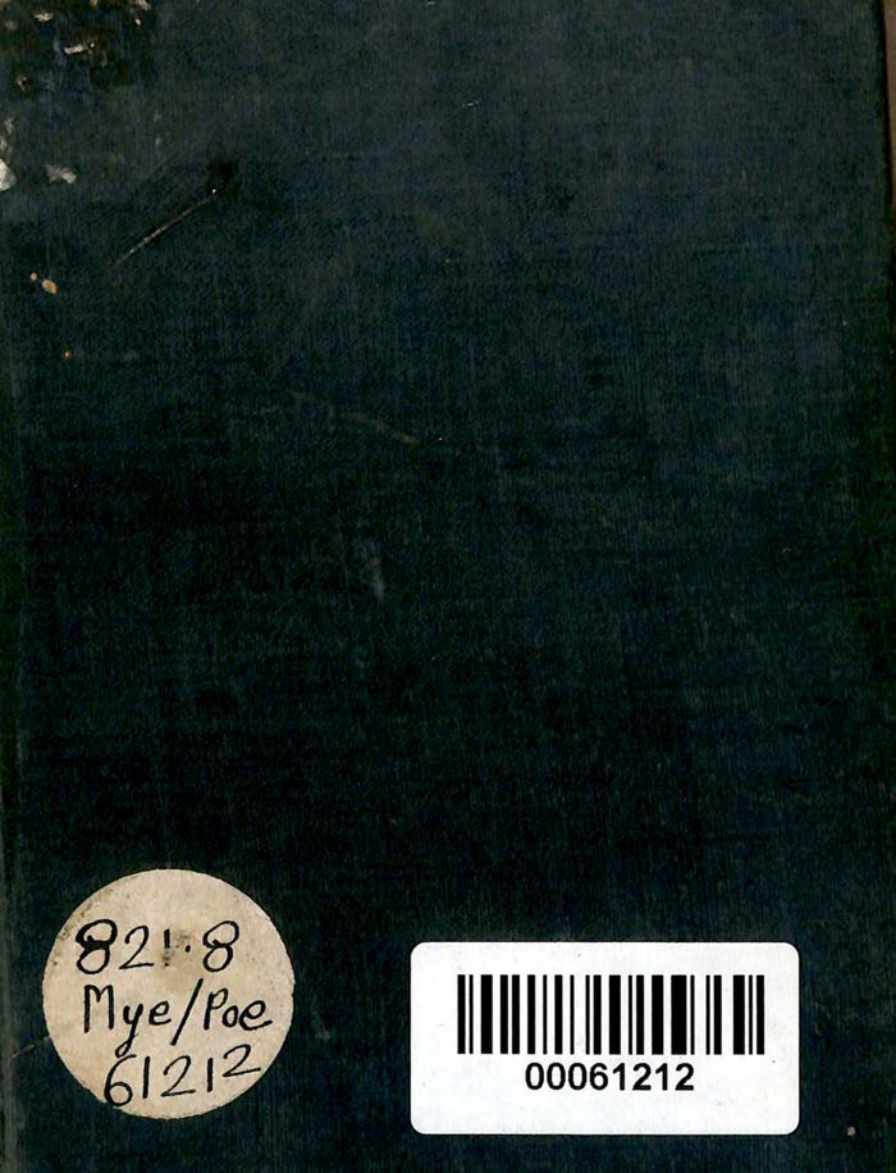
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POEMS.

POEMS

BY

ERNEST MYERS.

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1877.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE WORLD'S WINTER	1
'COULD YE NOT WATCH ONE HOUR'	6
RÊVERIES DE VOYAGE:	
I. LUGANO	15
II. FLORENCE	18
III. ROME	20
IV. ROME	24
V. ATHENS	26
VI. ARCADIA	28
VII. ITHOME	32
VIII. LEAVING ATHENS	33
IX. SYRACUSE	35
ITALIA REDIVIVA	39

PAGE

ETSI OMNES, EGO NON 41

'IF BUT THY HEART WERE STONE' . . . 43

TO A DWELLER IN A GREAT CITY 45

PHILHELLENE 47

THE LOST BROTHER AMONG THE NATIONS . . 54

A STORY FROM AELIAN 56

YOUTH AND TRUTH 58

PEREUNT ET IMPUTANTUR 61

'THEY SAY THY ART IS FAILING' 63

REST 64

ACTA MAGNANIMORUM:

I. THE LIBERATION OF DORIEUS . . . 67

II. KALLIKRATIDAS 71

III. THE WRECK OF THE 'BIRKENHEAD' . . 73

ON THE SAME 76

IV. THE DEATH OF JOHN CHIDDY . . . 77

ON REVISITING THE CUMBRIAN HILLS . . . 81

MONTIGENA 82

FROM HORACE 84

FROM LOUIS BOUILHET 86

SONG 89

PAGE

THREE SONNETS:

I. THE BANQUET 93

II. THE LOST SHEPHERD 94

III. REBUKE 95

LOVE'S ADVERSARIES: 99

LOVE AND FATE, I 99

„ „ II 100

LOVE AND DEATH, I 102

„ „ II 104

„ „ III 106

THE NIGHT'S MESSAGE 111

PINDAR 112

MILTON 113

DARWIN 114

SIDNEY'S FAREWELL 115

THE DEATH OF GIORGIONE 117

'THE SEA-MAIDS' MUSIC' 121

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THE WORLD'S WINTER.

SAIDST thou, The night is ending, day is near?
Nay now, my soul, not so;
We are sunk back into the darkness drear,
And scarcely soon shall know
Even remembrance of the sweet dead day;
Ay, and shall lose full soon
The memory of the moon,
The moon of early night, that cheered our sunless way.

Once, from the brows of Might,
Leapt with a cry to light
Pallas the Forefighter;
Then straight to strive with her
She called the Lord of Sea
In royal rivalry

For Athens, the Supreme of things,
The company of crownless kings.
A splendid strife the Queen began,
In that her kingdom making man
Not less than equal her own line
Inhabiting the hill divine.

Ah Fate, how short a span
Gavest thou then to God and godlike man!
The impious fury of the stormblasts now
Sweeps unrebuked across Olympus' brow;
The fair Forefighter in the strife
For light and grace and glorious life
They sought and found not; she and hers
Had yielded to the troublous years;
No more they walked with men, heaven's high interpreters.

Yet, o'er the gulf of wreck and pain,
How softly strange there rose again,

Against the darkness dimly seen,
Another face, another queen,
The Maiden Mother, in whose eyes
The smile of God reflected lies;
Who saw around her gracious feet
The maddening waves of warfare meet,
And stretching forth her fingers fair
Upon the hushed and wondering air
Shed round her for man's yearning sight
A space of splendour in the night.

Are her sweet feet not stayed?
Nay, she is also gone, the Mother-maid:
And with her all the gracious company
That made it hope to live, and joy to die.
The Lord is from the altar gone,
His golden lamp in dust o'erthrown,
The pealing organ's ancient voice
Hath wandered to an empty noise,
And all the angel heads and purple wings are flown.

Wherefore in this twice-baffled barrenness
This unconsoled twice-desolate distress,
For our bare world and bleak
We only dare to seek
A little respite for a little while,
Knowing all fair things brief,
And ours most brief, seeing our very smile,
Mid these our fates forlorn,
Is only child of grief,
And unto grief returneth, hardly born.

We will not have desire for the sweet spring,
Nor mellowing midsummer—
We have no right to her:
The autumn primrose and late-flowering
Pale-leaved inodorous
Violet and rose shall be enough for us:
Enough for our last boon,
That haply where no bird belated grieves,

We watch, through some November afternoon,
The dying sunlight on the dying leaves.

Ah, heard I then through the sad silence falling
Notes of a new Orphean melody,
Not up to earth but down to darkness calling,
Down to the fair Elysian company,
Ah then how willing an Eurydice
The kindly ghosts should draw with noiseless hand
My shadowy soul into the shadowy land;
For on the earth is endless winter come,
And all sweet sounds and echoes sweet are dumb.

'COULD YE NOT WATCH ONE HOUR?'

ARISE, put on thy strength,
O soul released at length
From thy blind bondage in the cave obscure:
Let night call unto night;
Thou to the comely light
Lift thy confronting brow, serene and sure.

Why turn thy glances back?
Here glows thy glorious track,
Bright with the dawn and light of forward feet:
A daughter of the morn
New-risen and new-born,
Why tarriest thou to take thy birthright sweet?

Poor soul, thou art perplext,
Thou hast so long been vext
By shadowy hopes that baffling beckoned thee:
What wonder thou wert fain
To list whatever strain
Amid the dimness spake consolingly?

Of that enchanted shade
Thou hast renouncement made,
Yet weepest for the flowers that round thee grew:
Bleak seems the field and bare,
Shorn of its harvest fair;
Not yet is death of old things birth of new.

But other seed more blest
Is in the kind earth's breast:
Watch yet one hour; thy recompense is nigh:
Yea, and thy Gods that were
Are here again more fair,
All human, all divine, that cannot die.

How long, how long, forlorn Humanity,
Must thou gaze forth from Naxos' shore in vain
For vanished sails that ne'er come back to thee,
For Theseus' arms that clasp thee ne'er again?
Let thy sad eyes look round;
The young God ivy-crowned,
Splendidly coming up out of the sea,
Is stretching forth his hand to marry thee
With marriage-ring of the new bridal-vow.
Be glad, for thy best life begins but now;
For he shall breathe a new love in thy veins,
And shall drown utterly all regretful pains,
Pouring thee draughts of his celestial wine,
And blessing thee with kisses o'er and o'er,
Until he set thee for a heavenly sign,
To be a starry splendour evermore.

O longing listener on the stormy shore,
Are they so harsh, the sounds that round thee roar?

A little while, thy disentangling ear
Amid the tuneless din shall hear
An under-streaming subtle symphony,
A mystic maze of ordered melody
Drawn out in long importunate agony
With tender piteous straining
Of lute to lute complaining
Pleadingly ever, and with keen replying
Living intensely in pain, and almost dying,
Until the trumpet's pealing voice
Bids the wondering world rejoice,
And all-compelling sweeps along
The faltering feet of stringëd song.

Yet are there moments sweeter far than all,
And holier far, that on the spirit fall
Of him who, midst the eager strife
Of Hate and Death with Love and Life,
A little quiet space may win
From war without and war within,

And suddenly from the dim earth borne on high
Upon the wings of his great ecstasy
To some still mountain-top of magic spell,
Shall gaze into the things invisible,
And know with purged and understanding eye
The wondrous forms of fair futurity.

Then let the marvel of the whole
Strike on the wishing, wondering soul,
That her serene delight shall seem
Most like the pious painter's dream,
Presenting how in solemn wise
They come with ancient mysteries
To dedicate the Child Divine
Within his Father's golden shrine:
And fair boy-angels bravely clad
On either side are softly glad;
Not yet their lips will touch the flute,
Not yet their fingers wake the lute,
Nor may the dreaming gazer know
How sweet the spell-bound flood shall flow,

But dreams in wonder more and more
Of some consummate act in store,
Wherein shall fit fulfilment be
Of such divine expectancy.

RÊVERIES DE VOYAGE.

I. LUGANO.

TE LIQUIDI FLEVERE LACUS.

WHAT time beneath the southern face
Of the two-fronted Alpine pile
I lingered for a little space
Where the blue lakes in sunshine smile,

Full fondly may my heart recall
How all the purple peaks aglow
Burned o'er the steep-set woods that wall
The length of lordly Lario.

Yet was not that the dearest time,
Nor yet when on the evening air
The strange soft bells with answering chime
Made sounds as sweet as sights were fair.

But this it was that bade mine eyes
With tender mindful joy be dim,
That all about the happy skies
There seemed a voice that spake of Him

Who surely on these shores had found,
As even on his own Mantuan plains,
The sweeter grace wherewith he crowned
The grace of sweet Sicilian strains;

Who haply in the summer-tide,
Where browsing goats the chestnuts stir,
Heard from the mountain's shaggy side
The singing of the vine-dresser.

Beneath such pure nocturnal skies
Menalcas' carol rang afar,
And Daphnis raised his wondering eyes
To the new sign of Caesar's star.

O sweetest singer, stateliest head
And gentlest ever crowned with bay,
It seemed that from the holy dead
Thy soul drew near to mine that day.

And all fair places to my view
Were fairer; such delight I had
To deem that these thy presence knew
And at thy coming oft were glad:

That these to thy last going gave
Thine own brave Umbro's elegy;
For thee Cerisio's, Lario's wave,
The limpid lakes made moan for thee.

II. FLORENCE.

O SURELY surely life is fair,
And surely surely hearts are true;
Be witness, balm of April air,
And boundless depth of midnight blue.

The trouble of an hour ago,
That seemed to gather round our way,
Is vanished as the last year's snow
That hid the hills of Fiesole.

And softly still the moonlight falls,
O love, and makes for thee and me
An Eden mid the bay-leaf walls,
The odorous bowers of Boboli.

How gently o'er our spirits move
  The golden hours we feared would die!
The very flame that threatened Love
  Has lent us light to see him by.

III. ROME.

TO THE STATUE OF LOVE, CALLED 'THE GENIUS OF THE VATICAN.'

FAIR Love, by spoiling strangers torn
From thine Hellenic home,
For ever wingless left to mourn
In this high place of Rome;

O Love, to me who love thee well,
Who fain would hear and mark,
The secret of thy sorrow tell,
And why thy brows are dark.

It is not for thy vanished wings,
Thou madest no more mirth
Amid thine Hellas' lovely things,
In the sweet spring of earth.

And still sweet airs of Athens flow
From marble tresses shed;
The old Ionian glories glow,
O Love, around thy head.

The little Love who smiles below,
Thy loveliest brother boy,
Knows no such spell to loose his bo
No care to cloud his joy.

He bends to string his bending bow
In playful haste to harm;
Two thousand years that come and go
Have spared his childish charm.

But thou hast caught a deeper care;
His smile is not for thee;
Thou canst not all so lightly wear
Thine immortality.

O is it that thy spirit knew
Its solitary fate,
That, whatsoe'er of beauty grew,
Thou might'st not find thy mate?

Or is it that thy thoughts had range
O'er the sad years to come,
Of beauty suffering envious change,
Of music marred and dumb,

Of other gods and other lords
Than thine and thee aware,
Of struggling shapes and fiery swords
Vexing thy quiet air?

Ah, not to men who round thee rove
Thy secret wilt thou tell:
Thus then, O fairest, noblest Love,
O saddest Love, farewell.

Yet if some pang of stifled pain
  Move thee from mystery,
In a dim dream returned again
  Murmur a word to me.

So I might rise and speak it then
  In understanding ears,
That word might stir in hearts of men
  The inmost springs of tears.

IV. ROME.

GUIDO'S 'AURORA.'

WE too see the clouds that surround her,
We too see the track of the car;
But none sees her herself, none hath found her,
There is none she hath honoured so far.

But this painter, scarce meriting, knew her
When he painted that picture of light;
O fortunate Reni! you drew her,
For she made herself plain to your sight

As she comes, the bright goddess of morning,
With the dawn in her eyes and her hair,
Making glad with a jubilant warning
The depths of the amorous air;

And the car of the god follows after,
Led forth by the Hours on his way;
Led forth to the sound of their laughter,
And leading the light of the day.

V. ATHENS.

AN ANCIENT SCULPTURED TOMB.

HE goeth forth unto the unknown land,
Where wife nor child may follow; thus far tell
The lingering clasp of hand in faithful hand,
And that brief carven legend, *Friend farewell.*

O pregnant sign, profound simplicity!
All passionate pain and fierce remonstrating
Being wholly purged, leave this mere memory,
Deep but not harsh, a sad and sacred thing.

Not otherwise to the hall of Hades dim
He fares, than if some summer eventide
A message, not unlooked for, came to him
Bidding him rise up presently and ride

Some few hours' journey to a friendly house,
Through fading light, to where within the West,
Behind the shadow of Cithaeron's brows,
The calm-eyed sun sank to his rosy rest.

VI. ARCADIA.

THE TEMPLE AT BASSAE, DEDICATED TO APOLLO THE HELPER BY THE PEOPLE OF PHIGALEIA AFTER A PLAGUE.

OF all fair scenes let this be called most fair;
Not for the prospect only, plain and hill
Upsoaring to the solitary snow
Or merged in silver shining of the sea,
And these grey columns faintly flushed with rose,
Divine in ruin—not for these alone:
The Presences of Gods are all around.
But now amid the oaks of Arcady
Pan passed me, hidden by the russet leaves
That trembled at his coming, and I knew

By their glad shuddering that the God was there;
And far to the East, where stern Taÿgetus
Rears his steep snows against the blinding blue,
Lo, in the hanging cloud-wreaths hardly seen,
Stalk the dread phantoms of the Dorian Twins,
Still tutelar, and o'er the tomb forlorn
Of their discrownëd Sparta watching well.

But chiefliest where I stand is holy ground.
Helper Apollo! by that name revered
In this fair shrine with song and sacrifice,
What sacred prompting urged the votive zeal
Of Phigaleian folk so high to build
Thy temple, lone amid the lonely hills?
Perchance some citizen flying in dark dread
From the plague-stricken city of his folk
Paused in this place; then suddenly he was ware
Of One who stood beside him, whose bright head
Makes even Ólympus brighter when he comes,
And the sweet air wherein gods breathe more sweet:
No rattling darts of death his shoulder bare,

As once at Troy, nor like to night he came,
But robed in dewy radiance of the dawn.
Almost he might have seemed his Healer Son,
Koronis' child, yet more august than he.
"Return unto thine house; the plague is stayed:"
So spake he; and the wondering man returned
And found the vision true, and told his folk
Of that bright God who helped them, and they heard
And worshipt, and with full hearts fervently
On this fair spot, where in the vision stood
That mighty Helper of the hurts of men,
They reared this pillared temple chastely fair,
This sister of the Athenian maiden-shrine,
This Dorian mood breathing through silent stone.
O noble symbol of a noble life,
A life wherein all vigour and all grace,
All quickening impulse and all chastening thought,
The inspiration of things old and new,
Of high tradition and of bold advance,
Should meet to mould a human soul divine,

Serene and strong, a healthful harmony;
And all this goodly thing be consecrate
Unto that Power of Healing, whose high task
Is wrought of Man's hands and of God's alike,
Of God as Man, at his most Godlike then.
Verily such life were as this stately shrine,
Which seems, albeit of sculptured pediment,
Of metope and of cornice left forlorn,
Yet not less holy therefore or less fair,
Only more mild and more majestical.

VII. ITHOME.

IT is no God that haunts the cloven crest
Of this Messenian mountain of old fame,
But thou, the peer of Gods, immortal name,
Epameinondas, whom these heights attest
Saviour and Father of a race opprest.
Even now the diadem of thy towered wall
Not quite has crumbled, and shall well recall
That day of pride, when, at the imperial hest
Of thy strong stamp and splendour of thy spears,
Messenia stirred, and sprang to reassume
Her ancient heritage of the Dorian peers,
Fierce Sparta's spoil; and after dolorous gloom
Of that long death through thrice a hundred years
Arose in scorn of tyrants from the tomb.

VIII. LEAVING ATHENS.

ΟΛΙΓΟΝ ΤΕ ΦΙΛΟΝ ΤΕ.

NO relic rare, O Attic soil, from thy fair shores returning,
No clay or marble disinterred I bear beyond the sea;
Too many such lament their home in stranger halls sojourning—
The remnants of thine ancient art, let these abide with thee.

One simple spoil thou wilt not grudge of all thy treasure-troven,
One gracious gift, beloved land, I take with conscience clear—

A handful of thy wild-flowers, by fairest fingers
woven,
And a wreath of Attic olive-leaves, "a little thing
but dear."

Hymettus' golden honey-bees that haunt his thymy
covers
Of all their joyous pasturage have no such joy as
mine,
For o'er these petals dried and dead a subtler
fragrance hovers,
And Memory can mix from these a honey more
divine.

IX. SYRACUSE.

THIS is the seventh day since my glad eyes
Beheld the holy plain of Marathon.
Seven days: but in the story of the earth
Is writ, From Marathon to Syracuse
Are seventy years and seven; for so long
Endured that city's prime which was the world's.
In this blue slumbering harbour at my feet
Clashed the great combat of extreme despair,
The agony of Athens: those grey slopes
Hold yet the cruel quarries where the sun
Beat fierce upon the pain of godlike limbs,
Which erst upon the great day of the feast
Rode radiant to Athene's citadel.

City of Theseus, thou too, having dared
Much nobly, like thy champion prince of old,
Wert lastly over-daring to thy fall.
But not on those dark ways shall Memory pause,
Dark ways of Erebus and hounds of hell;
Rather shall she bethink her with what front
He met the twy-form monster, Minotaur,
Unterrified, and smote, and ended him,
And with what thanks round that bright athlete thronged
The clinging hands and glad adoring eyes
Of those fourteen, plucked by his hand from death.
Like danger threatened then the hopes of Earth,
O saviour city, when the barbarous hosts
Swarmed westward, and the multitude of isles
Trembled, and Thebes Kadmeän, and the soil
Which bred Achilles; but thy champion arm
Took up the perilous challenge, and struck home.

ITALIA REDIVIVA.

"WHAT though the branch be broken
And fit for winter flame,
Yet shows it still a token
Of the high wood whence it came."

So sang the ancient singer:
And, though we deemed her dead,
We saw a glory linger
Round that beloved head.

But lo, the leaves are springing
From that dead branch and dry,
New life thy breath is bringing
O saviour Liberty.

And these memorial mountains,
And woods of grey and green,
And voice of falling fountains,
Shall hail thee for their queen:

And gates of famous story,
Made pure from tyrants' sin,
Fly back to greet the glory
Of thy fair feet entering in.

Like mighty waters meeting
Our voice with hers shall cry—
A great acclaim of greeting—
England to Italy:

A voice of gratulation
O'er Alp and plain and sea,
Nation to new-born nation,
The free soul to the free.

ETSI OMNES, EGO NON.

HERE where under earth his head
Finds a last and lonely bed,
Let him speak upon the stone:
Etsi omnes, ego non.

Here he shall not know the eyes
Bent upon their sordid prize
Earthward ever, nor the beat
Of the hurrying faithless feet.

None to make him perfect cheer
Joined him on his journey drear;
Some too soon, who fell away;
Some too late, who mourn to-day.

Yet while comrades one by one
Made denial and were gone,
Not the less he laboured on:
Etsi omnes, ego non.

Surely his were heart and mind
Meet for converse with his kind,
Light of genial fancy free,
Grace of sweetest sympathy.

But his soul had other scope,
Holden of a larger hope,
Larger hope and larger love,
Meat to eat men knew not of:

Knew not, know not—yet shall sound
From this place of holy ground
Even this legend thereupon,
Etsi omnes, ego non.

"IF BUT THY HEART WERE STONE."

IF but thy heart were stone—
Strong stone or steel—
It never had made this moan,
It never had learnt to feel.

The storm should never have swept
Over the place of its rest,
It never had listened and leapt
At the cry of a life opprest.

It had never been shaken and torn
At the sight of a loved one's pain,
It had never stood still, forlorn,
At the thought "Is there meeting again?"

It had stood by itself secure,
Bound round and beneath and above,
Fenced from the plaint of the poor
And free from the fires of love.

Thou hadst smiled in godlike mirth,
Thou hadst lived serene, alone,
Thou hadst lived a lord of earth,
If but thy heart were stone.

TO A DWELLER IN A GREAT CITY.

STAND still in this thy city,
And listen through the throng
To the terror and the pity
Of an awful undersong;

Grim sounds unnumbered blending
To load the blackened air,
Unresting and unending,
A chorus of despair:

"About, above, and under,
There holds us night and day
A chain we cannot sunder,
A debt we cannot pay.

"No act of ours had bound us;
From our first hour of earth
The net was knit around us,
We are bondmen from our birth.

"So hath it been, so is it,
So shall it still be done,
Till one with vengeance visit
The things that shame the sun.

"No charm to soothe or quicken
Dead weight of weary strife,
No shade for souls that sicken
In the furnace-fire of life;

"No hope of more or better
This side the hungry grave,
Till death release the debtor,
Eternal sleep the slave."

PHILHELLENE.

I.

GRANT me all the store of knowledge, grant
me all the wealth that is,
Swiftly, surely, I would answer, Give me rather, give
me this:—

Bear me back across the ages to the years that are
no more,
Give me one sweet month of spring-time on the
old Saronic shore;

Not as one who marvels mournful, seeing with a
sad desire
Shattered temples, crumbling columns, ashes of a
holy fire;

But a man with men Hellenic doing that which
there was done,
There among the sons of Athens, not a stranger
but a son.

There the blue sea gave them greeting when their
triremes' conquering files
Swam superb with rhythmic oarage through the
multitude of isles.

There they met the Mede and brake him, beat
him to his slavish East;
Who was he, a guest unwished-for bursting on
their freeman's feast?

There the ancient celebration to the maiden queen
of fight
Led the long august procession upward to the
pillared height.

There the hearts of men beat faster while the glad
Hellenic boy
Ran and wrestled with his fellows, knew the struggle
and the joy.

From the deep eyes in his forehead shone a radiance
brave and fair,
Flashing down his shapely shoulders ran the splendour
of his hair.

Man with man they met together in a kindly life
and free,
And their gods were near about them in the
sunlight or the sea.

There they sought the feet of Wisdom, pilgrims on
a holy quest;
Ray by ray the sun of knowledge dawned upon the
wakening West.

Every thought of all their thinking swayed the world for good or ill,
Every pulse of all their life-blood beats across the ages still.

——Vain the vision, vain the longing: passionless with marble frown
Law of Fate and law of Duty gaze the gathering fancies down.

Ah! their light has set and left us groping for its fitful gleams;
Like a dream their glory glimmers from the far-off world of dreams.

Wherefore dream we not, but rather wake with disenchanted eyes,
Turning steadfast brows of purpose on our sad realities.

Not for us the fair illusion of their fond imaginings;
Yea, themselves undid their glory, sowing seeds of
greater things.

Who shall throw his manhood from him, choose
the portion of the boy?
Who shall make undone the done thing? who shall
bring us back the joy?

Shall we shun the harsher struggle, feeble with
regretful fears,
Long to lay our birthright from us and the burden
of the years?

Nay, our burden is our glory: nay, we would not
though we could.
Is it well done?—it is well done; this too shall be
greater good.

II.

AY, let our fates be such, for such they are:
So ordereth the voice oracular
Of the slow-moving, ever-moving years,
Too stern, too kind, to stay them for our fears;
And our own breasts that know a younger age
Our creditor for ampler heritage.
Yet whoso anywhiles hath lingered long
In that high realm of unforgotten song,
This man, methinks, shall never quite set free
His soul from that constraining phantasy;
Still sometimes in a lonely place and fair,
Where the warm south-winds stir the rainy air
And sigh themselves to silence, shall his ear
In that vague wistful sighing seem to hear
From dreamy regions of the elder earth
A mournful music sweeter than our mirth;

Some harping of the god of golden head
By Delian waters waiting to be dead,
Some voice of wailing wood-nymphs amorous.
Far off, within a vale of Maenalus.

THE LOST BROTHER AMONG THE NATIONS.

HE is no more, that brother dear and fair,
Whose living made the whole world glorious;
His wings are closed, and for no sigh or prayer
Shall that bright brother fly again to us.

What though the earth hath many a son full strong
To the wide brotherhood of peoples born,
These to a dark and wingless race belong,
And with the mother for their lost one mourn.

Ah me, and yet of old time not in vain
The queen of Eryx and Idalion
Wept sore for her Adonis, till again
From the pale wave of envious Acheron

The longed-for Hours slow treading, soft and slow,
Bare back her love, delivered from the deep;
But our Adonis no return shall know;
He sleeps, unwakening, an eternal sleep.

Far far away in some enchanted glade,
The world's most secret and most solemn place,
He sleeps unchanging in the twilight shade,
A grave smile hovering o'er his heavenly face.

Yet some, by grace vouchsafed to faithful love,
Are thither rapt to gaze upon the shrine,
Where on his calm couch in the glimmering grove
Lie the bright limbs of the dead boy divine.

Thenceforth if any time there come to these
Some sweeter melody, some sight more fair,
They dream they catch his call among the trees,
His golden wings upon the stream of air.

A STORY FROM AELIAN.

A TROOP of boys went bathing to the sea,
All fair, but one the first in youthful bloom:
Him marked a Dolphin, tenderest of his kind,
Far off, and joined his gambols in the wave.
And a great love grew up between the twain:
For day by day the boy came to the shore,
And day by day the faithful fish was there,
And on his back would bear him merrily
Amid the dashing waves, a burden dear.
But on an unblest morn, what time their mirth
Was happiest, and the boy in trustful glee
Upon his friend had stretched his limbs at length,
And backward leaned, and shouted to his steed,
Ah me, the sharp spear of the Dolphin's fin

Pierced his fair side and spilt his tender life.
So there was no more play between the twain.
But that poor fish, perceiving how the foam
Was crimsoned all with blood about his track,
And the sweet voice, which was his music, hushed,
Knew that all joy was slain, and agony
Seized him, and he desired himself to die.

So to the beach he bore him mournfully
Amid the dashing waves, a burden dear;
And on the beach he laid him softly down,
And by his side gave up his grieving soul.

But the boy's comrades, sorrowing for their mate,
Took up the corpse and washed it of the blood,
And laid it in a grave beside the sea,
Beside the sea, beneath the yellow sand,
And by his side they laid the Dolphin dead,
Remembering that great love he bare the boy.

YOUTH AND TRUTH.

NOW in life's breezy morning,
Here on life's sunny shore,
To all the powers of falsehood
We vow eternal war:

Eternal hate to falsehood;
And then, as needs must be,
O Truth, O Lady peerless,
Eternal love to thee.

All fair things that seem true things
Our hearts shall aye receive,
Not over-quick to seize them,
Nor over-loth to leave;

Not over-loth or hasty
To leave them or to seize,
Not eager still to wander,
Nor clinging still to ease.

A band of many tempers,
Of many moods are we;
Some kindly god hath yoked us
With a yoke of liberty;

Of various brain and temper
Of many strains and stocks,
Some sworn to godlike Milton,
And some to genial Fox.

Some cherish far-sought knowledge,
Some laughter keen and rare,
Some drink to Galileo
And some to bright Voltaire.

But one vow links us ever,
That whatsoe'er shall be,
Nor Life nor Death shall sever
Our souls, O Truth, from thee.

PEREUNT ET IMPUTANTUR.

"HE came with me home to my dwelling,
He abode with me all that night,
But ah me for my tale and its telling,
He was gone with the dawn of the light.

He was gone without whisper of warning,
He was gone, and he comes not again;
He heeds not the voice of my mourning,
He leaves me alone to my pain."

Thou also, O Earth, art forsaken,
And the song of the maiden is thine;
For ever thine eyes as they waken
Look wistful for lovers divine.

Bright visions and presences splendid,
They have loved thee a night and a day
From the void of the ether descended
To the void they are vanished away.

O Earth be at peace from thy sighing,
For the sound of thy sorrow is vain:
There be others to come at thy crying,
To come, and to leave thee again.

"THEY SAY THY ART IS FAILING."

THEY say thy art is failing,
They warn thee of decay,
Thy poesy is paling
Before their prose to-day.

The song-birds hear the warning,
They yield—can Time be wrong?—
Yet in the twilight morning
Shall steal an hour for song.

The nightingale shall steal it,
In the deep wood o'er the hill:
Deem not, she doth not feel it,
Yet know, she sings there still.

REST.

WELL hast thou done, and with benignity,
Who didst behold and beckon me to thee;
For all the old cares unkind, while here I lie,
Are wholly vanishëd that seemed so sore,
And this sweet hour at least I must deny
That I shall see or know them any more.

For I, in this fair rest abiding here,
Nor forward look nor back for joy or fear,
But am, and am at peace, as one who swims
Drifting half-sunk in a deep spring-water,
Cool, cool and soft around his soothëd limbs,
And murmuring music in his dreamful ear.

Acta Magnanimorum.

I. THE LIBERATION OF DORIEUS.

In the year 406 B.C., seven years after the annihilation of the Athenian army before Syracuse, and two years before the final defeat of Aigospotamoi, the Athenian fleet took prisoner one Dorieus, a member of the great Rhodian house of the Eratidai, who had brought ships to the aid of Sparta against Athens. Dorieus had himself been thrice crowned at Olympia, and his father Diagoras had won the boxing-match there in the year 464, when Pindar wrote for him the ode called the Seventh Olympian, which the Rhodians engraved in letters of gold in the temple of Athene at Lindos.

It was the custom of the time either to release prisoners of war for a ransom or else to put them to death. The Athenians asked no ransom of Dorieus, but set him free on the spot.

AH, my Athens, those were years of anguish,
Since thy proud host perished o'er the foam,
Left to rot upon the field, or languish
Pent in Dorian prison-pits of doom:
From that dire defeat
Turn'st thou back to meet
Foes without and fiercer foes at home.

Yet in those nine years, when need was sorest,
How thy high heart stirs and strives alway!
Still the Queen of Light, whom thou adorest,
Breathes some brightness through the dolorous day:
As we read, the page
Glows with noble rage;
Deadly wounded, thou hast turned to bay.

But, more glorious than thy glorious anger,
Shines thy sudden mercy in its stead;
Clutched by death, nor agony nor languor
Bows the bearing of thy queenly head:
Fearless yet and free
Sayest thou, "I am she,
Athens yet, though half my force be fled.

"Ay, amid this darkened age and dwindled,
Still my sons have memory of their fame;
Now for one fair moment see rekindled
One divine spark of the ancient flame;

Know them, now as then,
Marathonian men,
Champions of the high Hellenic name.

"Rhodian Dorieus, thou hast fought to tame me,
Fought and failed, and yielded to my spear:
Hadst thou conquered, conquest could not shame me,
So to thee too can no shame come near;
Still thine eager sight
Keeps the battle's light,
Still thy brave brow fronts me without fear.

"But to mine eyes other light around thee
Hovers yet upon thy clustering hair,
Light of silvery olive-leaves that crown'd thee
When the Great Games hailed thee victor there;
When the mid-month moon
Heard the swelling tune
Heralding the athlete strong and fair.

"Nor in vain the Theban eagle, soaring
High in heaven the golden clouds among,
Bare thy sire's name for eternal storing,
Sealed in labyrinth of splendid song;
Still in golden line
From the Lindian shrine
Flames his praise the sunlit seas along.

"By the spell of those Pindaric splendours,
By the old Athenian chivalry,
By thy sire, and by my sons, defenders
Of that God who crowned both him and thee,
Noble Rhodian foe,
Gird thy sword and go,
Athens gives thee greeting, thou art free."

II. KALLIKRATIDAS.

The Athenians' magnanimity in liberating Dorieus was even surpassed in the same year by the Spartan admiral Kallikratidas, that glorious exception among his countrymen, who, having taken certain Athenians prisoners of war at Methymna in Lesbos, set them all at liberty, declaring that he would never keep Hellenes in bondage.

A few months afterwards Kallikratidas was killed, leading his fleet at the great battle of Arginousai.

"I STRIVE with Athens but to win once more
Her equal sword among the guardian band
Of powers Hellenic for the Hellenic land.
Brothers, bear back this message to her door.
There lies the foe eternal, there the war
Holy and just." He pointed with his hand
Eastward to Susa, o'er the Mysian strand
And sinuous bays of that ill-trusted shore.

O heart heroic, Sparta's noblest son,
At what a height thy soaring spirit burns
Star-like, and floods our souls with quickening fire!
Too soon, great heart, thy generous race is run,
Too soon the scattered night of hate returns,
And dark Lysander's unrelenting ire.

III. THE WRECK OF THE 'BIRKENHEAD.'

On the 26th of February, 1852, about 2 o'clock in the morning, the troop-ship 'Birkenhead' struck on a rock off the Cape of Good Hope, and it immediately became manifest that the ship must very shortly sink. The crew numbered 130, the troops on board 480, with 20 women and children. Three boats were lost in launching, and the remainder could carry few beside the women and children. These were embarked, under the care of as many of the crew as could accompany them without overloading the boats. The rest of the crew, and the troops, drawn up on the deck, remained and sank with the ship.

TO England's flag a challenge
Came from the rebel sea:
"Yield us your babes and women,
Yield us your pride, and flee!"

O Sea, thy wrath hath fooled thee!
Sea, thou art over-bold!
Know'st thou not then that banner?
Thou knew'st it surely of old.

Across the waste of waters,
Of help and hope forlorn,
Their level eyes untroubled
Looked with a quiet scorn.

For honour and for pity
They made their choice to die,
And the great name of England
Held up their hearts on high.

Still on the deck unswerving
The bayonet-line gleamed bright,
Then, with the plunging vessel,
Plunged to eternal night.

So made they sure their triumph
Over the rebel sea;
For Death stood near to serve them,
And sealed their victory.

ON THE SAME.

THEIR unblanched lips drank up
Death from the sea;
They quaffed this loving-cup,
England, to thee.

IV. THE DEATH OF JOHN CHIDDY.

On the 31st of March, 1876, near Bristol, a large stone had fallen from a quarry in front of a railway-train running at full speed. A quarryman named John Chiddy, who was working near the place, caught the stone from the rail and saved the train, but was himself struck dead by the engine.

WITH roar of whirlwind wheels
The flashing train flies by;
No shock the traveller feels,
He hears no cry,

Nor starts, nor holds his breath,
Nor wonders, nor looks back;
He saw not what dire Death
Couched in his track.

But one man saw, and stayed not;
One man sprang forth to save;
And for their lives who prayed not
His own life gave.

The train bore on in thunder
The travellers on their way:
Beneath them, cloven asunder,
Their saviour lay.

No more his life-blood wets
The iron pathway's side:
The iron folk forgets,
For whom he died.

ON REVISITING

THE CUMBRIAN HILLS.

O NATIVE land of hills and limpid lakes!
O dearer far to me than fertile plains!
After how long exile in southern towns
Once more do I revisit thy grey rocks,
And thy large air, and sound of falling streams.
Whereof when I remind me oftentimes,
Waking, or in delusion of sweet dreams,
I count my lot thrice blest that I was born
In such a land, among so brave a race,
Where not in vain hath Nature ministered
Majestic service to the mind of man.

MONTIGENA.

MIGHT I but die knowing some sure advance
In the long travail of humanity
Toward truth and freedom and high-hearted love,
And seeing this England (which to call mine own
Shall ever thrill my heart as her free flag
Thrills with the sea-wind in it) pure and strong,
Not cankered quite with gold and gold-ward lust;
Then might I leave in mine appointed time
Life, and the things for which this life is dear,—
This goodly fellowship of faithful friends,
True-eyed congenial spirits, youth's best prize,
And the sweet smiles of women, and the gifts
Of Nature, glories of the even and morn,
The voice of seas and streams and murmuring woods,

Flowers, and the joy of birds;—these should I leave,
Not unregretful truly or unamazed
At the quick doom which mocks the hopes of men,
Yet not perturbed, or over-loth to fare
Forth from this April morning we call life.

Yet, might so much to craving fancies fall,
Fain were I, might I choose, that I should die
Among my native mountains, where these eyes
First woke to love of beauty, where I roamed
An eager child, clasping my father's hand.
Ah, great and gentle spirit, early found,
And all too early lost, so might I dream
That in the ancient voices of the hills,
The moorland wind, the lonely cataract,
Or in the hovering cloud-wreaths, thou wert near
So might my life be rounded with one joy,
The peace of Nature's presence and of thine.

FROM HORACE.

To the Fountain of Bandusia.

O CRYSTAL-CLEAR Bandusian spring,
Well worthy the sweet offering
Of wine, with flowers engarlanding,

A kid to-morrow morn I vow,
Whose budding horns upon his brow
Foretell his lustihood,
His fights and loves; but all in vain,
So soon his sacrifice must stain
The rills of thy cold flood.

The fiery dogstar's angry heat
Touches not thee; thy cool retreat
The tired plough-oxen know and love,
And all the flocks that round thee rove
Have found thy waters sweet.

Thou too with famous streams shalt be
Enrolled in new nobility,
For sake of this my song that sings
The oak-crowned rocks whereout thy springs
Come leaping laughingly.

FROM LOUIS BOUILHET.

AN ECLOGUE.

Traveller.

THE moonless dark has covered all the plain;
O silent shepherd, whither art thou fain?

Shepherd.

My path, O traveller, is a path of care;
While others sleep I alway onward fare.

Traveller.

And that dark flock that lengthens from thy feet,
Hath it no bell nor any pastoral bleat?

Shepherd.

O traveller, see thou tell it unto none,
Of all my flock no voice hath any one.

Traveller.

Ah me, that flock! it frights me in the gloom;
It seems of spectres gathering from the tomb.

Shepherd.

O traveller, see thou tell it unto none,
It is the flock of my desires foredone.

Traveller.

Ah God! the throng comes thickening through the night,
And on, and on, beyond my failing sight.

Shepherd.

Count thou no more, for, as the minutes flee,
For each one monster more is following me.

Traveller.

What God enchains thee to these spectral sheep?
Come shepherd, come unto our flowery vale;
There o'er my thatch the honeysuckles creep,
And at my window sings the nightingale.

Shepherd.

Not there, O traveller, in thy happy land,
Not there in peace this pallid brow may dwell;
My flock and I must drink on Lethe's strand,
And pasture in the plains of asphodel.

SONG.

STAY me no more; the flowers have ceased to blow,
The frost begun:
Stay me no more; I will arise and go,
My dream is done.

My feet are set upon a sterner way,
And I must on;
Love, thou hast dwelt with me a summer day,
Now, Love, begone.

THREE SONNETS.

I. THE BANQUET.

NOW, as when sometime with high festival
A conquering king new realms inaugurates,
The souls of men go up within the gates
Of their new-made mysterious palace-hall.
And on their ears in bursts of triumph fall
Marches of mighty music, while below,
In carven cups with far-sought gems aglow,
And lamped by shapes of splendour on the wall,
The new wine of man's kingdom flashes free.
Yet some among the wonders wondering there
Sit desolate, and shivering inwardly
Lack yet some love to make the strange thing fair;
Yea, to their sad souls rather seem to be
Sheep from the sheepfold strayed they know not where.

II. THE LOST SHEPHERD.

AY me, the kindly shepherd comes not now
Whose feet were once so fair within the fold,
In whose high presence were our fathers bold.
They said, his tender heart would not allow
His sheep to perish; his side and his bright brow
And hands and feet were bleeding; so they told.
But of the face of him might none behold
Even a little, save he be somehow
Seven times refined in love's refining fire.
This man should haply something see aright.
Alas, and must he know as he draws nigher
The longed-for image from the straining sight
Of his sad eyes and pain of his desire
Receding, rapt into the lonely night?

III. REBUKE.

WITHAL a still voice in an under-strain
Low in my heart half audible there seems:
"Visions of visions," saith it, "dreams of dreams,
What doth thy soul with these, O over-fain
To have done with doubt, to rest, and to see plain?
Yet not without a plea thy yearning eyes:
How last a gift is patience to the wise!
But thou art born for more than longing pain.
Look forth and know thine order among men:
Nor sire nor son but even thyself art thou;
The land for them; thy home is on the sea.
Yet shall the wild waves cast thee now and then
Some pearl-like word to bind about thy brow:
'This first: where Love is, must Faith also be."

LOVE'S ADVERSARIES.

LOVE AND FATE.

I.

IT hath gone forth, the all-o'erwhelming word;
Through the void silence of my heart it pealed:
It hath gone forth, even though thou hast not heard,
The exiles' doom to everlasting sealed.

For other eyes the sun shall bend his course,
The sweet surprise of his fair seasons bringing,
In other veins the blood shall gather force,
With voice of birds and happy flowers upspringing:

While we, thrust forth from regions warm and clear
And sunny seas that far between us roll,
Inhabit each our several mansions drear,
The Arctic thou, and I the Antarctic pole.

LOVE AND FATE.

II.

I WOULD to God, my darling, you and I
Were somewhere lying very silently
Beneath the green sod of a mountain glen,
A place untilled and far from feet of men,
Yet not with stones made rough, not harsh and bare,
But greensward slopes with scattered woodland fair:
And there should be no birds to mock at us
With their full notes of descant amorous;
No nightingales should madden the sweet air
With passion such as ours in days that were:
For that is long since over and quite gone,
And our hearts can but ache to think thereon.

But sometimes when a still night flooded all
That serene place with moonlight mystical,
Then might we feel the heart of the great Earth
Beating through ours in peace that knows not mirth:
For that mild light should be to her more kind
Than parching sunshine or the strenuous wind:
And is not she too weary of the weight
Of her great being and mysterious fate,
And wearier ever of the restless race
Of foolish men, that for the little space
Of their poor lives are hurrying to and fro
To vex their souls with ever-gathering woe?
And so perchance in such sweet night and still
Likewise through us might some dim memory thrill
Of days forgotten long and far away,
When in her breast first without form we lay,
And no power yet had quickened heart and brain
To this immense capacity of pain.

61212

LOVE AND DEATH.

I.

OF all the songs the birds sang,
But one remains with me,
The song to which the words rang
Of an ancient elegy.

Of all the powers that moved me,
My heart remembereth
But one, even Love, that loved me,
And one that hated, Death.

Why call the voices yonder
That stirred my soul of yore?
Leave me to dream and ponder
And image o'er and o'er

The haloed hair that crowned her
With a crown of Paradise,
The grace that flowed around her
From the sweet and suasive eyes,

The voice as soft and tender
As the still sea on the sands,
The supple form and slender,
And the little loving hands.

LOVE AND DEATH.

II.

IN dreams I visited the world below,
Where waking yet, alas, I may not go.

It was that night, I knew it in my dream,
Wherein her shade should reach the Stygian stream.

On that drear bank, beneath the sombre air,
I waited shivering till her shade were there.

But envious ghosts closed round me as I stood,
Their chill hands on the fountain of my blood.

So when she came I could not speak or stir;
I scarce had joy to look once more on her.

Shrouded and veiled she to the shore drew nigh
Where that grim bark was waiting silently.

Still veiled, she took her place within the boat;
She bowed her sweet head down, and knew me not.

She knew me not, and the ghosts froze my breath;
Little I won by that foretaste of death.

She took her place within the waiting bark,
And it moved forth upon that water dark.

Then once, but once, her breast heaved suddenl
Then knew I well, that was a sigh for me.

Ah me, but yet beyond this stream, I think,
Another water would they have thee drink.

But thou by Lethe's river, O my love,
Wilt not as yet be fain to drink thereof.

LOVE AND DEATH.

III.

FAR up a lonely mountain glen
That sleeps between the folded hills,
There lies a glade unknown to men,
Where even the brook her babbling stills.

The brook becomes a brimming pool,
And beech and oak with meeting shade
Whisper across the waters cool
The blisses of that quiet glade.

The solitary dewfalls wet
Green turf below, green leaves above;
And there, 'mid those green leaves, was set
The dwelling of a gentle dove.

To that sweet bird, that peaceful place,
With winged steps my feet would fly;
And there we dreamed away the days,
The happy days, my dove and I.

One eve I hasted to the grove;
My thought would fain my feet outr
But as I neared the place of love
A sudden cloud obscured the sun:

No murmured welcome could I hear;
The pulses of my heart were quelled:
And lo, upon the streamlet clear
A floating feather I beheld.

A thunderbolt had cleft the oak
Wherein my bird had built her nest:
No other tree had felt the stroke
But that one home, that only breast.

That glade shall never greet again
My feet that wander wearily,
Nor sound nor sight appease my pain,
Since my loved bird is lost to me.

THE NIGHT'S MESSAGE.

LAST night there came a message to mine ear
Saying: Come forth, that I may speak with thee.
It was the Night herself that called to me.
And I arose and went forth without fear
And without hope; and by the mountain-mere,
In the great silence sitting silently,
Drank in amazed the large moon's purity:
Yet was my soul unsoothed of any cheer.
But when the moon had set, a great mist lay
On the earth and me, and to its wide soft breast
Drew forth the secret woe we might not say.
Then slowly, its brooding presence lightlier pressed,
It heaved, and broke, and swayed, and soared away:
And the Earth had morn, and I some space of rest.

PINDAR.

(PREFIXED TO A TRANSLATION OF THE ODES.)

SON of the lightning, fair and fiery star,
Strong-winged imperial Pindar, voice divine,
Let these deep draughts of thy enchanted wine
Lift me with thee in soarings high and far,
Prouder than Pegaseän, or the car
Wherein Apollo rapt the huntress maid.
So let me range mine hour, too soon to fade
To the dull presence of the things that are.
Yet know that even amid this jarring noise
Of hates, loves, creeds, together heaped and hurled,
Some echo faint of grace and grandeur stirs
From thy sweet Hellas, home of noble joys.
First fruit and best of all the western world,
Whate'er we hold of beauty, half is hers.

MILTON.

HE left the upland lawns and serene air
Wherefrom his soul her noble nurture drew,
And reared his helm among the unquiet crew
Battling beneath; the morning radiance rare
Of his young brow amid the tumult there
Grew grim with sulphurous dust and sanguine dew;
Yet through all soilure they who marked him knew
The signs of his life's dayspring, calm and fair.
But when peace came, peace fouler far than war,
And mirth more dissonant than battle's tone,
He, with a scornful sigh of his clear soul,
Back to his mountain clomb, now bleak and frore,
And with the awful Night he dwelt alone,
In darkness, listening to the thunder's roll.

DARWIN.

UNRESTING and unhasting Labourer,
Thy faithful toil and eye intuitive,
And all the gifts a lavish life can give,
Have crowned thee Nature's chosen Interpreter.
The attributes august we feign in her
Are verily of thy being, and shall live
Linked with thy name, what chance soe'er arrive,
A memory and a music rich and clear.
Therefore henceforth thy spirit evermore
Shall seem inhabitant of each thought and thing
It pondered; whether where the murmuring bee
Buries his bright plumes in the blossom's store,
Or where within the coral's rampart ring
Sleep the still pools amid the clamorous sea.

SIDNEY'S FAREWELL.

O SONGS, my songs, that came so rarely to me,
So rarely, yet so sweetly, all my own,
How thrilled the liquid ether through and through me
On the fair sheen of your young wings upflown.

Lo now they call to me, the sterner voices,
In sterner sort bidding to serve my kind;
Ay, and within me my own soul rejoices,
Scenting the scent of battle on the wind.

Yet, O my songs, full loth were I to grieve you,
Albeit ye came so rarely to my call:
But for a little, let me deem, I leave you;
I will return and make amends for all.

Here, where the sunlight through the green leaves falling
Blesses your happy valley far withdrawn,
Once more my feet shall wake the echoes calling
To trembling twilight or to trembling dawn.

Here shall once more the strange familiar gladness
Throb through me, hearkening to your holy things,
And here once more the sweet mysterious madness
Shall lift me heavenward on your wondrous wings.

THE DEATH OF GIORGIONE

IT is all done; I can no longer move
This hand, which while it lived could quicken life
Even in dead things, but now itself is dead.
I have painted my last picture: all is done.
O suns and moons of Venice, fare ye well!
O Venice, my beloved, I must die.

Die? but the life is quick again within me,
My heart and all my veins are full of fire,
Such as the sunset rains upon the sea
In mine own Venice, where these eyes must close.
Ay, and in this supreme and speechless hour
A thousand thousand sounds and sights of glory,
Delicious dreams and multitudinous,

All memories ten times intensified
Even from the extreme intensity of old,
Throng on me and overthrow me and make me mad.
They are all singing, all the wondrous voices
That sang by night in Venice to the moon:
The sound of joy august, a popular voice,
Proclaiming triumph of Venetian arms;
The sound of sailors' carol, full and clear,
Singing the songs of Venice o'er the brine,
Children of Hadria, fierce and frank as he;
The sound of lutes, pleading to charmëd ears
Of women fair as daughters of the gods;
And when these fail, I hear the evening wave
Before the black prow ripple soothingly,
Or heave large breasts against the marble stai
Softer than doves'; but softer yet the sound
Of answering heart-beats and of whispered lov
They are all glowing, all the glorious colo
That swelled my soul with rapturous emulation
To flash them back to nature, flame for flame.

I see the sunrise flush the northern hills,
Coneglia to Cadore, range on range;
And all the pomp of man and pomp of God
That met beneath the morning on the waves,
When the Republic royally went forth
With all her armaments and admirals,
Banners and blazons; and the Ring was thrown,
And the City married to the eternal Sea.

Lo in this moment all that I have dreamed
And all that I have painted, this I am.
I am that youth, his hair with vine-leaves crowned,
Who feels amid the revel a mailed hand
Set on his shoulder, and at the touch awakes
The moan of memories unmistakeable
That murmur in his ear, The end is come.
I am the wondrous player playing music,
Into whose human and mysterious eyes
Some spirit, speaking through my hand, has breathed
The unread open secret of a soul.
And I am there where the hot swooning day

Broods o'er the teeming stillness quiveringly,
And golden light distils from golden limbs,
Voluptuous, naked in the summer bower:
While sounds of summer pipings, hardly heard,
Stir springs of tears that rise not to the eyes.

And all that bower with me is sinking slowly
Down through the dark earth, with unchangëd air,
To the dim realm Elysian, where we dream
Beneath another sun and other stars.

O other sun be thou as fair as this,
But kinder; send me not so soon away;
Lend me more life before the second death,
If second death there be, or second life.

Be there or be there not, I am too weak
To think thereon, or think again at all.
A cloud creeps up: the earthly colours reel;
Mine eyes, that longed for light, are tired of it;
Tired; and my hand is dead; and I desire
A little space at least of gentler dreams,
Of gentler dreams a space, or gentlest sleep.

'THE SEA-MAIDS' MUSIC.'

ONE moment the boy, as he wandered by night
Where the far-spreading foam in the moonbeam was white,
One moment he caught on the breath of the breeze
The voice of the sisters that sing in the seas.

One moment, no more: though the boy lingered long,
No more might he hear of the mermaiden's song,
But the pine-woods behind him moaned low from the land,
And the ripple gushed soft at his feet on the sand.

Yet or ever they ceased, the strange sound of their joy
Had lighted a light in the breast of the boy;
And the seeds of a wonder, a splendour to be,
Had been breathed through his soul from the songs of the sea.

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